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Summary record of the 13th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 13 October 2016, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Mr. Eriza (Vice-Chair) ..... (Indonesia)
later: Ms. Mejía Vélez (Chair) ..... (Colombia)

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In the absence of Ms. Mejía Vélez (Colombia), Mr. Eriza (Indonesia), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 64: Promotion and protection of the rights of children (*continued*) (A/71/41)

(a) Promotion and protection of the rights of children (*continued*) (A/71/213, A/71/253, A/71/261, A/71/277 and A/71/413)

(b) Follow-up to the outcome of the special session on children (*continued*) (A/71/175)

1. **Mr. Radcliffe** (Chief of the Global Issues Section), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on child, early and forced marriage (A/71/253), said that the report focused on the progress made worldwide since the release of the report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) on that subject (A/HRC/26/22 and A/HRC/26/22/Corr.1). An expert workshop would be held in Geneva in the following week to assess the impact of ongoing initiatives at the regional and national level. Child, early and forced marriage was both a human rights and a development concern. A rights-based approach to child and forced marriage was key to a future in which not only was marriage delayed but the choices of girls and women were expanded beyond marriage.

2. **Mr. Mezmur** (Chair of the Committee on the Rights of the Child) said that, as at 12 October 2016, 196 States had ratified or acceded to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, 165 States had ratified or acceded to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict; 173 had ratified or acceded to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography; and only 50 States had signed and 29 had ratified or acceded to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure. The Committee viewed with concern the fact that about 70 initial reports under the second of those optional protocols were still overdue and more than 50 under the first.

3. The Committee on the Rights of the Child had sent three letters to States parties raising its concern about reported serious violations of children's rights, and had issued nine press releases, either alone or jointly with other mandate holders. It had also received its first complaints under the optional protocol on a communications procedure. All States had been invited to comment on the Committee's draft general comment on children in street situations. At its seventy-second session, the Committee had unanimously adopted the Guidelines against Intimidation or Reprisals (San Jose Guidelines) and intended to implement them in line with the Convention and the three optional protocols thereto, and the Committee's Rules of Procedure. Convinced of the importance of engaging with States parties, the Committee had revived informal meetings with States, inviting them to provide input for the advance versions of draft general comments.

4. Although the Convention clearly had the potential to have a positive impact on the lives of children throughout the world, some ratifications had been accompanied by reservations that discriminated against more vulnerable children. A few States even continued to apply the death penalty for offences committed by persons under the age of 18 years. Those practices undermined the power of the Convention to act as a legal and moral good for children. The price tag of that situation was a violated childhood.

5. Child poverty prevented children across the world from enjoying the rights enshrined in the Convention. If the international community was serious about ending extreme poverty within a generation, strategies for combating child poverty that promoted a child-rights-based approach must be brought centre-stage.

6. The Committee was also concerned about the persistent and widespread prevalence of harmful practices that were grounded in discrimination and were often justified by invoking sociocultural and religious customs and values. Particularly worrying was the worsening migration crisis and its negative impact on the rights of millions of children worldwide. Children and their families fleeing war and seeking refugee status should receive appropriate protection and humanitarian assistance in accordance with article 22 of the Convention. No crisis was neutral to children, and the primary concern must be the best interests of the child. The forthcoming twenty-seventh anniversary of the Convention would be an opportunity to reflect

on implementation with more emphasis on the real living conditions of all children and on creating a world fit for all children.

7. **Ms. Adamson** (Observer for the European Union) asked the Chair of the Committee on the Rights of the Child what efforts were envisaged to speed up the pace of ratification of and accession to the optional protocols. In relation to budgeting for the rights of the child, an update would be useful on the impact or expected impact of general comment No. 19, released on 19 July 2016. She wished him to highlight some best practices for integrating a child rights-based approach in relation to migration policies. Lastly, she would welcome further information on the measures taken by the Committee to implement General Assembly resolution 68/268 on strengthening and enhancing the effective functioning of the human rights treaty body system.

8. **Mr. de la Mora Salcedo** (Mexico) enquired whether the Committee had identified any measures successfully implemented by other Member States to reduce the violence perpetrated against children through the media and information technologies, including social networks. He also wished to know what minimum elements should be contained in a State policy that sought to curb child abuse perpetrated through the electronic media.

9. **Mr. Kelly** (Ireland), noting that States were shifting their collective focus towards the implementation of the Declaration of the Rights of the Child and the commitment to protect the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all refugee and migrant children, requested an update on the development of a joint general comment on the human rights of children in the context of international migration.

10. **Mr. Mezmur** (Chair of the Committee on the Rights of the Child) said that the Committee had begun work on the joint general comment on the human rights of children in the context of migration in response to challenges that had arisen in relation to conceptualization, implementation and interpretation by States parties of their obligations under article 22 of the Convention. The new general comment was being drafted jointly with the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. In June 2015, each Committee had set up a working group, and a concept note had been posted on the website of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. A number of organizations had responded with input. Comprehensive regional consultations would be held, and it might be possible for children to participate in the drafting process.

11. In June 2015, the Committee had already been working on three other general comments. The general comments on public spending and on children in the context of adolescence had already been adopted and the general comment on children in street situations would most likely be adopted in January 2017.

12. With regard to the Optional Protocol on a communications procedure, it was not clear why the rate of ratification had been less than anticipated. The complaints mechanism provided a critical element of justice that would move children's rights from rhetoric to reality, and many stakeholders had shown their enthusiasm during the drafting process. States that were considering ratification were very interested to hear what measures other States had taken to ensure that children had access to justice initially, and as a priority, in the domestic sphere. Complaints should only be filed under the Optional Protocol as a measure of last resort, when domestic remedies had been exhausted. It was helpful for States that had ratified the Optional Protocol to share their good practices with States that had not yet done so. Perhaps a group of friends of the Optional Protocol could be established.

13. Child-friendly budgeting was essential, even in the context of austerity measures, and the general comment on budgeting and children's rights was long overdue. States appearing before the Committee were often asked about the child-friendliness, effectiveness and transparency of their budgets, and yet their delegations rarely included a representative of the Ministry of Finance. Committee members had shared advance versions of the general comment with States to seek their input and endorsement, and were now busy with national and regional launch activities.

14. General Assembly resolution 68/268 had been discussed at the Committee's sessions in Geneva. As a result, the Committee would soon be sending out notes verbales about use of the simplified reporting procedure, which might begin in the second half of 2019. The Committee was also working to ensure that its concluding observations were more focused and

concrete, by identifying just five or six critical issues. In the past, some States parties received as many as 70 observations and did not know where to start. The Committee was also considering the issues of scheduling, word count limits and PaperSmart, and its sessions would soon be held on a paperless basis.

15. With regard to migration, article 22 of the Convention was important for all States parties — not just for European States or for Central American States. There was no provision in that article for exceptions when public opinion or the prevailing political discourse did not uphold compliance with children's rights.

16. The education crisis for migrant, asylum-seeking and refugee children was a crisis within a crisis– some children were not receiving any education. Migration detention for children should be ended, and age-determination processes should be compliant with the rights of children. In some cases the age-determination processes at borders were so intrusive that some children claimed to be adults. In the context of working on the draft general comment on children in the context of international migration, States should also consider the general comment on unaccompanied and separated children, which remained relevant and critical.

17. A few years previously the Committee had made recommendations on children's rights in the digital media. The two important elements were that access was critical and important for citizens of the twenty-first century, and that exposure led to risk, which could result in harm.

18. Lastly, he noted that it would be very helpful to make more substantial use of the election meetings that took place in New York every two years. Those meetings provided opportunities for the Committee to engage with States and learn from them. There was probably not any State that had succeeded in fully implementing the Convention, and all States should therefore increase their efforts to create a world fit for children.

19. **Ms. de Boer-Buquicchio** (Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography), introducing her report (A/71/261), said that children continued to be victims of indiscriminate attacks, terror, abductions, and sale and trafficking for sexual and labour exploitation in a world mired in conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic, Yemen, Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, Nigeria, the Central African Republic and South Sudan. Many had called for a halt to atrocities against children, redress for victims and an end to the impunity of the perpetrators. War affected every right of the child, and increased their vulnerability to fall victim to abuse, violence and exploitation.

20. Her report to the General Assembly focused on the sale of children for the purpose of forced labour. Children were particularly vulnerable to being sold and trafficked for the purpose of forced labour in situations of war and armed conflict, as illustrated in manifold cases worldwide. She urged the Governments of Ethiopia and South Sudan, in particular, to resume and redouble their efforts to free all abducted children in their countries, ensure the accountability of the perpetrators, provide comprehensive care and recovery programmes for child victims, after proper identification, and guarantee reunification with the children's families and communities.

21. The report listed seven comprehensive strategies to combat and prevent the sale of children for the purpose of forced labour listed in the report, and she drew particular attention to the regulation of intermediaries, labour inspections and prevention. With regard to the regulation of intermediaries, she noted that memorandums of understanding and codes of conduct had been adopted solely or mainly by the private sector, but were not legally binding. She therefore encouraged Member States to take positive steps through legislation, monitoring and accountability to enhance transparency and prohibit the sale of products that had involved the use of child or forced labour.

22. The sale of children for the purpose of forced labour deprived children of their childhood and compromised their future. It was immoral, illegal and under no circumstances justifiable. In 2006, Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro, in the report of the independent expert for the United Nations study on violence against children (A/61/299), had recommended setting the elimination of the worst forms of child labour as a priority. Ten years on, target 8.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals called on Governments to take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour and the worst forms of child labour, and end

child labour in all its forms by 2025. Target 16.2 called for an end to abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children. The establishment of alliances for the achievement of those goals was a step in the right direction, as was listening to what children themselves had to say. It was not only the responsibility of Governments, but also of adults, responsible global citizens and consumers to do everything possible to prevent children from being treated like commodities.

23. **Ms. McElwaine** (Observer for the European Union) said that she appreciated the frank description of physical injury, health issues and the psychological harm to child victims of sexual exploitation in the Special Rapporteur's report, as well as the recommendations for care, support and reintegration of young people. Her delegation was interested by the view expressed in the report that the lack of a common definition of the sale of children for the purpose of forced labour hindered efforts to counter the phenomenon. How did the Special Rapporteur's office work with organizations with similar mandates to promote agreed definitions, including for the purposes of supporting clear national legislation? Given that migration increased children's susceptibility to being sold or trafficked, she wondered what expectations the Special Rapporteur had of the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration. Lastly, she asked the Special Rapporteur to elaborate on lessons learned from successful examples of public-private partnerships, such as the International Cocoa Initiative, to help establish appropriate mechanisms for oversight at all levels of the supply chain.

24. **Ms. Vydmantas** (United States of America) said that her delegation appreciated the recognition in the Special Rapporteur's report of steps taken by the United States to enhance transparency and prohibit the purchase of products that have involved the use of child labour or forced labour and agreed that the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights were relevant to efforts to address child exploitation. She requested further details on child-sensitive complaint and reporting mechanisms and child-sensitive justice proceedings and examples of any such remedies that might already exist.

25. **Ms. Saran** (South Africa) said it would be interesting to know the Special Rapporteur's views on how multinational corporations could be held accountable when children's rights were violated as a result of a company's activities, especially in locations where legislation was weak, such as in developing countries. She also invited the Special Rapporteur to express her opinion on the initiative to elaborate an international legally binding instrument on transnational corporations and other business enterprises with respect to human rights.

26. **Ms. Klopčič** (Slovenia) asked what activities the Special Rapporteur recommended to raise awareness of the danger of sport being used as a way of selling children for the purpose of forced labour. She also wished to understand why experts on the sexual exploitation of children had in recent years referred to the term "child pornography" as an inappropriate expression, and had advocated using the term "child sexual abuse material".

27. **Mr. de la Mora Salcedo** (Mexico) said that, in the light of the recommendation in the report to adopt clear and comprehensive legislation criminalizing the sale of children for the purpose of forced labour, his delegation would welcome information on best practices identified by the Special Rapporteur for conducting investigations, penalizing offenders and providing redress for victims. Those best practices might inform the discussion of a common definition of the offence.

28. **Mr. Ajayi** (Nigeria) said that his delegation had appreciated the Special Rapporteur's cooperation during her joint visit to Nigeria in January 2016. Her current report provided a good opportunity to take stock of the rights of victims of the atrocities perpetrated by Boko Haram terrorists. Fighting against Boko Haram was a choice for progress, democracy and moderation over chaos, anarchy and extremism. In the context of the release that day of 22 of the girls abducted by Boko Haram, his Government would continue to seek the release of the remaining Nigerians held hostage by that terrorist group and welcomed the continuing cooperation of the Special Rapporteur in that regard.

29. **Ms. Kupradze** (Georgia) said that her Government had introduced legal and institutional mechanisms to combat child sexual abuse, sexual exploitation and pornography. Since the Special Rapporteur's visit to Georgia in June 2016, the

Parliament had amended a number of laws in order to provide identification documents for children living in the streets and had strengthened the role of social workers to protect children from violence. Her delegation looked forward to seeing the upcoming report and recommendations.

30. **Ms. Sukacheva** (Russian Federation) said it was regrettable that the Special Rapporteur's work had focused largely on the sexual exploitation of children, while the sale of children for the purpose of forced labour had been overlooked. Every country was clearly affected by trafficking in children, although the hidden nature of the phenomenon made it difficult to estimate its scale. Targets 8.7 and 16.2 of the Sustainable Development Goals demonstrated that the international community was intent on eradicating child labour and exploitation, but States would be unable to do so without the assistance of civil society and the private sector.

31. **Mr. Holtz** (United Kingdom) said that his Government was committed to ending child abuse in all its forms, including trafficking, and had adopted numerous programmes and laws in that regard. His delegation welcomed the findings in the Special Rapporteur's report that child marriage could amount to the sale of children for the purposes of forced labour. Forced marriage had been a criminal offence in his country since 2014, and his Government worked nationally and internationally to support the international movement to eliminate child, early and forced marriage. His delegation would be grateful for further information on the Special Rapporteur's efforts to reach the most marginalized children, especially those affected by conflicts or by multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination.

32. **Ms. Moutchou** (Morocco) said that the demand for and provision of sexual services involving children was driven by paedophilia and other forms of sexual abuse. The pornography industry also served as a catalyst for demand for child pornography and exploitation. She was interested to hear the Special Rapporteur's view of that analysis.

33. **Ms. de Boer-Buquicchio** (Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography) said that one of the objectives of her report had been to provide conceptual clarity. It was very important to make a distinction between trafficking and the sale of children when seeking to amend legislation and ensure criminalization and accountability. Clear legislation that made accountability possible was an important step forward, and it should criminalize both the sale of children for the purposes of forced labour and the conditions leading to it, such as debt bondage. The children who had been forced to engage in such activities, however, should not be criminalized.

34. On the occasion of the renewal of the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, she hoped that there would be an opportunity to reflect on the use of the term "child pornography". Since pornography typically depicted adult sexual relationships, the word implied a certain legality, which was completely inappropriate when used in relation to children. The mandate could be renamed without affecting its scope; one possible alternative was "the production and use of child-abusive images". A change in terminology would represent great progress and would send a far better message. The same was true of the term "child prostitution", since children did not prostitute themselves, but rather were prostituted. The *Terminology Guidelines for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse*, prepared by an inter-agency working group and adopted in Luxembourg in 2016, had provided clear guidance on how the various terminological issues could be addressed.

35. Since she was an independent expert, there were no specific mechanisms in place for cooperation with other international organizations. However, when formulating her recommendations, she had drawn on the standards set by and the interpretation given to the relevant provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and also to the relevant conventions of the International Labour Organization.

36. The global compact on migration would be a key document. It should be human rights-based, protect the rights of children and address the dangers they faced during the migration process, such as trafficking and sale. In view of the current migration crisis, she agreed that States should establish and open more regular migration channels and ensure the protection of all human rights in employment. In addition, residence permits should not be tied to a single employer, so that

all migrant workers, in particular young children, could change employment if necessary. That was particularly important in the area of sport.

37. Reporting mechanisms were among the effective remedies that should be made available to children. They should be child sensitive and lead to child-sensitive justice proceedings. Independent human rights institutions, such as ombudsmen for children, could offer appropriate remedies. In addition, labour inspections should be developed and enhanced, so that they could identify situations that ran counter to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Optional Protocols thereto, and the relevant conventions of the International Labour Organization.

38. Regarding the private sector, she reiterated her recommendation to implement the numerous existing international standards, such as the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, through independent third-party monitoring, proactive investigations, random unannounced assessments and strategies for preventing the sale of children.

39. **Ms. Guzmán Madera** (Dominican Republic), speaking on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), said that its member States were well known for their commitment to advancing the rights of the child. Mostly middle-income countries, they were working to address childhood vulnerabilities due to racial discrimination and gender inequality; violence, organized crime and drug trafficking and the effects of the global financial crisis and natural disasters.

40. They recognized the need for attention to vulnerable groups such as children with disabilities and indigenous children and, in particular, for the mainstreaming of issues related to indigenous children in their national development policies. They remained committed to intensifying their efforts to prevent all forms of discrimination against indigenous children, in cooperation with indigenous peoples.

41. They called on all countries involved in the migration phenomenon to promote and protect the human rights and fundamental freedoms of migrant children and adolescents, on the basis of the principle of shared responsibility, and to safeguard the interests of minors in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations. The human rights of children must be respected regardless of their migration status, and States should take into consideration the recommendations of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights when designing migration policies. Given the complex reasons for the mass migration of accompanied and unaccompanied minors, it was important to coordinate the efforts of States and international organizations. The commitments made during the third Meeting on Migrations of CELAC were a step in the right direction. In view of the importance of adequate nutrition for early childhood development, they were also pleased to report that they had begun implementation of the CELAC Plan for Food Security, Nutrition and Eradication of Hunger 2025.

42. Violence was pervasive and had a lasting impact on children's lives, generating huge costs for society. The CELAC member States categorically condemned bullying and committed themselves to taking appropriate steps to prevent it, including by combating stereotyping and discrimination. Once again, they stressed the need for all States to strengthen their efforts to develop early childhood programmes, with the support of international organizations. Education was a human right, a social investment and the most important public good in terms of sustainable development.

43. The CELAC member States attached great importance to all forms of international cooperation and reiterated the need to improve the coordination of assistance to developing countries. The realization of the rights of children hinged on successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which would require a multifaceted approach and the international community's commitment to mobilize all necessary resources.

44. *Ms. Mejía Vélez (Colombia), Chair, took the Chair.*

45. **Mr. Wafy** (Niger), speaking on behalf of the Group of African States, underscored that children's welfare and the protection of their rights was a crucial component of human and social development. Sustainable Development Goal 4, in particular, could be achieved only by building and upgrading educational facilities that were child, disability and gender sensitive, and by providing a safe and inclusive learning environment for all. Although some progress

had been made in terms of school enrolment rates and the gender gap in schools, African countries still faced hurdles to the achievement of free universal and compulsory primary education for all.

46. The plight of children in African States who were caught up in conflict, and therefore had to drop out of school, was a major concern. The African Group therefore supported the achievements of the "Children, Not Soldiers" campaign and commended Member States that had committed to ending and preventing the recruitment and use of children by security forces. The Group also appealed for improved advocacy and implementation of the guidance note on Security Council resolution 1998 (2011) to protect schools and hospitals from attack in conflict-affected areas.

47. In accordance with the Secretary-General's appeal for primary education to be made compulsory and available to all refugee children, the African Group welcomed the launch of the Education Cannot Wait fund during the World Humanitarian Summit and urged the international community to contribute to the fund. With regard to displaced children, political will would be needed to end conflicts and allow the safe return of children. Efforts should focus on long-term solutions to mitigate the root causes of displacement, while providing children with support and ensuring family reunification. Prolonged detention was not only detrimental to children's psychological development, but also deprived them of critical years of education.

48. Welcoming the view of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict that Member States should develop operating procedures to expeditiously hand over children who were captured or who surrendered in the course of military operations to child protection actors to reintegrate them into their communities, he called on partners to increase technical and financial assistance to host communities. In its campaign to silence the guns by 2020, the African Union had pledged not to bequeath the burden of conflicts to the next generations of Africans and had established an annual consultative platform at which stakeholders could discuss developments, constraints and measures for achieving Agenda 2063.

49. Compliance with the Plan of Action adopted during the Special Session on Children was critical to the protection and promotion of children's rights, especially with respect to safe living environments, access to quality basic education, the promotion of opportunities for children and adolescents, and the elimination of discrimination and poverty. The African Group therefore advocated the elimination of female genital mutilation and forced child marriage.

50. **Mr. Marshall** (Barbados), speaking on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), said that tremendous progress had been made in various areas, including survival, health, early childhood education and rights. In particular, mortality among under children under 5 years of age had fallen by more than half between 1990 and 2015.

51. As part of their implementation of the Regional Framework of Action for Children 2002-2015, the States members of CARICOM had committed to, inter alia, harmonizing national legislation with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the optional protocols thereto, and developing policies and plans to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against children and adolescents. The region's progress was testament to the fact that the principles of the Convention were well accepted within CARICOM and to the hard work undertaken to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. The 2030 Agenda would build on previous gains and give States an opportunity to recommit to promoting a region and a world fit for children.

52. CARICOM had been focusing increasingly on the impact of migration on children: high-level discussions had been held as far back as 2008, studies had been conducted, and an informal working group had been set up. Member States had committed to upholding the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and, in accordance with their commitment to leave no one behind, had agreed that migrant children were first and foremost children. CARICOM hoped that the discussions regarding a global compact on migration would give due attention to the issue of migrant children.

53. The States members of CARICOM were committed to being effective advocates for children, which would involve producing disaggregated data and establishing appropriate mechanisms for tracking progress; supporting the most disadvantaged children; reviewing and reforming education systems; examining their justice systems; and enabling children and

adolescents to participate in decisions about their lives. CARICOM was reviewing its Regional Framework of Action for Children to ensure the Framework's relevance beyond 2015 and the Community's 2015-2019 Strategic Plan included provisions to ensure the development of children.

54. **Mr. Suan** (Myanmar), speaking on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), said that progress had been made around the world towards protecting children from violence, exploitation and abuse. However, while child mortality and poverty had been reduced and while more children were enrolled in schools, the rights of millions of children were still being violated and armed conflicts and violent extremism had deprived children of their basic human rights in many parts of the world. The 2030 Agenda had set goals that would contribute to the welfare and protection of children, and it was therefore incumbent on Member States to further strengthen national efforts and international cooperation to protect the rights of children.

55. The ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children had been established in 2004 and, in order to strengthen regional efforts around women's and children's issues, ASEAN had adopted the 2011-2015 Strategic Framework and Plan of Action for Social Welfare, Family and Children. Other recent significant achievements included the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women in the ASEAN Region and the ASEAN Safe Schools Initiative, both introduced in 2013. In February 2016, the Commission had reviewed various ASEAN programmes related to children's issues and had finalized the ASEAN Guidelines for a Non-Violent Approach to Nurture, Care, and Development of Children in All Settings. The Commission's work plan for the 2016-2020 period included support for the implementation of the ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on Elimination of Violence against Children. In September 2016, the Commission had launched a regional review on laws, policies and practices within ASEAN related to the identification, management, and treatment of victims of trafficking, especially women and children.

56. The Network of Social Service Agencies had set up a website with links to the ASEAN and Commission websites. That website would serve as a platform for 33 ASEAN social service agencies and other stakeholders interested in networking and sharing information and expertise on matters relating to violence against women and children.

57. ASEAN was collaborating with United Nations agencies and other development partners to advance children's issues. The Commission had been implementing projects supported by the European Union and the United States as well as projects undertaken in collaboration with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women). Partnerships between ASEAN and the United Nations had been reinforced during the meeting of ASEAN Foreign Ministers with the Secretary-General and the President of the seventy-first session of the General Assembly. ASEAN and the United Nations had reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening their partnership by implementing a new five-year plan covering the 2016-2020 period. The participants had also agreed on the need for strengthened cooperation in combating transnational organized crime, including trafficking in persons.

58. **Mr. Shava** (Zimbabwe), speaking on behalf of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), said that all the member States of SADC had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child and had acceded to the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. Various national laws and action plans had subsequently been developed to facilitate the implementation of those instruments. For example, in June 2016, the SADC Parliamentary Forum had adopted the Model Law on Eradicating Child Marriage and Protecting Children Already in Marriage, which had been the first model law on child marriage in the region and would require member States to amend their national laws so as to prohibit child marriages.

59. Violence against children and children in armed conflict remained problems, with children in conflict areas prevented from attending school and many at risk of abduction or trafficking. Some children were recruited as child soldiers or as victims of sexual slavery or forced marriage. There was an urgent need to protect children from all forms of violence, particularly in armed conflict.

60. Without basic services, children and youth were at risk of growing into vulnerable youth and vulnerable

adults, which resulted in a cycle of poverty and vulnerability for many families in the region. In order to break that cycle, the region had adopted the regional Strategic Framework and Programme of Action for Orphans and other Vulnerable Children and Youth, which focused on implementing common standards and guidelines for improving the delivery of basic services for orphans and other vulnerable children. The SADC Minimum Package of Services for Orphans, Vulnerable Children and Youth recognized the need for services in education and vocational skills, health care and sanitation, food security and nutrition, psychosocial well-being and social protection. The Minimum Package also identified HIV/AIDS as a major contributor to parental death in the most affected countries, which placed burdens on children and youths.

61. **Ms. Adamson** (Observer for the European Union) said that the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the most widely ratified human rights treaty, was an integral part of the European Union's fundamental rights policy, and her delegation called on States parties to withdraw any reservations to the object and purpose of the Convention and the optional protocols thereto.

62. The European Union was deeply concerned about migrant and refugee children. One in four asylum applicants in Europe was a child, and 31 per cent of the more than 1 million refugees who had arrived in Europe in 2015 were children, including 90,000 unaccompanied children. Migrant and refugee children should be treated first and foremost as children, and the relevant asylum procedures and the guidelines of the Council of Europe on child-friendly justice should be followed. The detention of children was a measure of last resort and should be used for the shortest appropriate period of time, with access to health care, education and facilities. Wherever possible, alternatives to detention should be sought.

63. Protection of child victims of trafficking and enhanced cooperation with international organizations was a European Union priority and a component of the European Union Strategy towards the Eradication of Trafficking in Human Beings (2012-2016). The 2011 European Union Anti-Trafficking Directive, which prescribed a set of provisions for child victims, including unaccompanied children, was in the process of being implemented. Migrants and refugees were exploited by criminal networks that targeted the most vulnerable, including children. The demand that drove all forms of child trafficking, whether child sexual exploitation or child labour, must be eliminated.

64. The European Union was concerned by the manner in which terrorist groups such as Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant indoctrinated and exploited children, forcing them to witness or carry out extreme violence and even using them as suicide bombers. The Radicalisation Awareness Network would examine the issue with a view to developing best practices for professionals working with child returnees.

65. Education in states of emergency and crises was a priority for the European Union, which had contributed to providing quality education in crisis environments for displaced and refugee children and adolescents. It promoted equal access to education for all children, including those with disabilities and those who faced marginalization or discrimination. In 2016, the European Union had increased its funding for education in emergencies to 4 per cent of its humanitarian aid budget.

66. Recent figures had showed that increasing numbers of children were being recruited and used by armed forces, groups and gangs. With a focus on community-based approaches, the European Union was advocating the demobilization and long-term reintegration of former child soldiers. The situation in Iraq, Syria, Yemen and the Sahel presented unprecedented challenges, including the traumatizing impact of violent extremism on children.

67. The European Union planned to strengthen its efforts to eliminate child labour in all its forms by the year 2025 through measures to implement a minimum working age. It supported the protection of women and girls by combating gender-based violence and funding for transnational projects to combat harmful practices such as child marriage, female genital mutilation, and gender-biased sex selection.

68. **Ms. Razzouk** (United States of America) said that children's rights continued to be violated all over the world. According to Save the Children, children had made up half of the casualties of the recent bombings in Syria, while the Syrian Network for Human Rights had reported in June 2016 that no fewer

than 21,000 children had been killed in that country since the start of the conflict, assigning blame for the majority of deaths to Syrian regime forces. The ongoing violence had led UNICEF to name Syria as the most dangerous place in the world to be a child, and the collective response from States was a test of their common humanity.

69. Refugee children were particularly at risk, and countries such as Chad, Jordan, Thailand and Turkey had made major commitments to help more than one million refugee children get an education. As part of the Leaders' Summit on the Global Refugee Crisis, the United States had provided nearly $37 million to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and $15 million to UNICEF to help reach the goal of sending one million refugees to school. The United States also strongly supported Education Cannot Wait, the world's first fund for education in emergencies and protracted crises. To address the range of challenges facing adolescent girls, in March 2016 Secretary of State John Kerry had launched the United States Global Strategy to Empower Adolescent Girls, while Let Girls Learn was a presidential initiative focused on making sure adolescent girls received a quality education.

70. Domestically, the United States was investing heavily in early childhood education. In addition, thanks to grant programmes such as the Race to the Top Fund, high school graduation rates were at an all-time high and more students were going to college than before.

71. **Ms. Abdelkawy** (Egypt) said that although the global awareness of violations against children had increased, that awareness remained limited and children were still suffering. Her delegation believed that, firstly, the family was the primary protector of children, as a family environment with a mother and father was needed to produce a physically and psychologically sound child. Secondly, given that children were considered the most important social group in terms of the 2030 Agenda, a framework should be developed that would follow up on the implementation of Agenda-related commitments. Thirdly, children's welfare was closely tied with the development of their talents and mental and physical capacities, as well as respect for parents, cultural identity, language and values.

72. The recommendations concerning migrant and refugee children made by Graça Machel in her 1996 report should be implemented, given the huge numbers of refugees produced by conflicts in various parts of the world. Egypt looked forward to future negotiations for a resolution on children's rights that would discuss the issue of migrant children, and hoped that there would be a focus on the needs of children and an avoidance of controversial topics. Finally, Egypt commended UNICEF for its current cooperation and looked forward to further cooperation in implementing the 2030 Agenda.

73. **Mr. Scappini Ricciardi** (Paraguay) said that with 38 per cent of the population of his country under the age of 18 years, his Government was gradually stepping up its investment in social programmes to improve health care and education for children and adolescents and alleviate poverty among them. A national policy to guarantee the human rights of children and adolescents was in force for the period 2014-2024 and, under the national early childhood development plan 2011-2020, the Government provided nutritious school lunches and snacks in an effort to improve learning, enhance academic performance and reduce the number of school drop-outs. Legislation forbidding corporal punishment and any form of cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment of children had been enacted.

74. Paraguay was one of the pioneers of the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children, which was in line with target 16.2 of the Sustainable Development Goals. Conscious of the fact that a considerable proportion of Paraguayan children and adolescents continued to be affected by poverty, including extreme poverty, and by violence, abuse, trafficking and exploitation, his Government reaffirmed its commitment to implement rights-based public policies for the comprehensive protection of children and adolescents, in which the primary consideration was the best interests of the child.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.